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ABSTRACT

This study involved the identification of factors associated with major organizational changes in public schools as affected by collective bargaining. The goal was to replicate Whyte's 1951 study of private sector organizational change to determine whether similar patterns existed in public sector organizational behavior. The study used Whyte's theoretical framework as a basis for data collection and analysis. Data for the case study were collected through personal interviews and document analysis in a single Pennsylvania public school district. Based on the theoretical framework and their data analysis, the authors developed a Public Sector Employee/Management Relationship Model, which identifies the five stages of tranquility, low conflict, high conflict, transition, and mutual accommodation. This model is similar to the three-stage model developed by Whyte in his 1951 study of a private sector organization. (Author/JG)

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Change from Strife to Accommodation in Organizational Behavior as Affected by Collective Bargaining: A Case Study

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Change from Strife to Accommodation in Organizational Behavior as Affected by Collective Bargaining: A Case Study

Purpose of the Study

This study involved the identification of factors which were associated with major organizational change as affected by collective bargaining. Specifically, the goal was to duplicate a study of private sector organizational change to determine whether similar patterns existed in public sector organizational behavior. A three stage settlement behavior model was utilized to show the influence of collective bargaining in the process of change. The process of change was reconstructed and analyzed in phases that ranged from unmanageable dysfunctional conflict to mutual accommodation.

Conceptual-Theoretical Framework

The case study method utilized for this study was a duplication of the methods used by Whyte (1951) in the private sector with procedures followed substantially identical. This replication enabled the investigators to determine whether similar patterns existed in both private and public sector organizational behavior.

The study utilized a description and analysis of a series of events associated with change based upon Whyte's (1951) theoretical model composed of four concepts: activities, interaction, sentiments, and symbols. An analysis of the description data was possible by use of the four concepts as classification. In each particular time period activities were taking place within certain physical surroundings by and among the participants. The description served as a measure of the pattern of activities, interaction, sentiments, and symbols within each time period identified. Generally, change in the activity pattern was accompanied by changes in interaction, sentiments, and symbols.

The usual application of the case study approach has been in the study of an abnormal or extraordinary situation. Case studies were seldom used to gather data for description of normalized events but rather utilized to investigate the deviant situation. Whyte (1951) heard of the tremendous improvement and organizational change that had taken place in the Chicago plant of Inland Steel Container Company. Whyte (1951, p. 230) stated that much more could be learned scientifically from studying a case involving considerable change in relationships than from a case which relationships remained much the same over a period of years.

Three time periods were identified which served as the basis for describing relationships that existed in the plant. These time reference periods were disorganized conflict, transitional, and organized cooperation. Whyte (1951) utilized the three time periods as a reference for showing how the pattern of activities, interaction, sentiments, and symbols changed as a result of various internal and external factors.

This study utilized Whyte's (1951) theoretical framework as a basis for data collection and further analysis. Of importance was an explanation and analysis of activities ranging from dysfunctional to functional and supportive activities with their corresponding affect on organizational change. The analysis lead to the development of a "Public Sector Employee/Management Relationship Model" which identifies five separate time periods and explains each in terms of activities, interactions, sentiments, and symbols.

Social conflict between organizations, and between leadership groups within organizations, was an area of research and discussion in administrative science, sociology, political science, and psychology. Coser (1966, p. 250) advanced the proposal that conflict and competition between the various orders, far from endangering integration, help to sew society together. Social conflict was projected to have social functions of a positive nature for the entire group as well as its members.

Lewin (1948, p. 163) discussed the need for group members' militant affirmation of group identity for group survival. Such was the case in the militant behavior of teachers when attempting to gain recognition as a viable entity in the decision making process. Society at large was unaccommodating to the public sector collective bargaining activity and militant activity became necessary to enhance a group's position as a contributor to the decision making process. Cunningham (1976, p. 12) urged administrators to contemplate further about how the collective bargaining process can be converted to genuine service as an instrument for educational change. It appeared that group militant behavior referred to by Lewin can be used as an instrument for change as postulated by Cunningham. Coser (1956, p. 39) substantiated the positions of Lewin and Cunningham saying that conflict eliminates the accumulation of blocked and balked hostile dispositions by allowing their free behavioral expression.

Militancy in teacher group behavior has a cohesive tendency for uniting its members for goal fulfillment. Warren (1972, p. 388) said that those who threaten with broader participation, were co-opted, controlled, or fiercely attacked by those in power. An increasing acceptance of contest (Ibid., p. 391), rather than collaboration, as an appropriate method for decision making has evolved in many situations. Conflict appeared to be a natural progression as a result of the unwillingness on the part of the power elite to accept special interest input for bilateral dicision making and the resultant increased cohesion of the outgroup to increase its power. An increase in resistance of one group produced a corresponding increase in group cohesion and uniform action on the part of the second group. Reduction of conflict in intergroup behavior is possible and desirable for promotion of societal goals.

The Sample

Criteria for selection of a single school district included a past history of employer/employee strife and a present organizational behavior defined as mutual accommodation. A settlement behavior model identified conflict and mutual accommodation as the paradigm extremes. Conflict is that state where one group's activities, interactions, and sentiments are incompatible with another group, producing interference in organizational operations. Mutual accommodation is an exchange process between two or more persons or groups achieved by eliminating or reducing hostility as by compromise or mutually beneficial activities.

Specific criteria utilized to identify the sample school district were as follows: (1) that current contract negotiations were complete or in a multi-year contract, (2) that the district was suburban or suburban/rural in nature, (3) that a prior history of strikes and strife existed, (4) that the community accepted the use of collective bargaining by public employees, (5) that the district was within a region where strikes by public employees are accepted, (6) that a change in organizational behavior from conflict through a period of transition occurred. These criteria not only served to identify the desired school district for this investigation, but were also utilized for the identification of another district for extended research.

Data Collection Method

The research was an ex post facto case study and the main data collection tools were interviews and document analysis. Interviews served as the main source for data and substantiated documentary data collected. Details of change were documented by reviewing mass media records, board records, teacher association records, and by interviewing board members, management personnel, professional employees, and residents of the selected school district. By compiling historical

data and verifying by personal interview, the data provided an identification of actions, patterns of actions, and relationships.

Initially, considerable time was spent reviewing documentary data. This procedure was planned so that the researcher would have a thorough understanding of the relevant documentary materials. Documentary materials were insufficient in themselves to provide the basis for a complete analysis. Interviews served as a main source of data as documentary material become more meaningful when the individuals gave full account of past actions and conflict.

By being in the school district for several weeks to establish a working rapport and collect documentary data, the first interviews provided complete cooperation with needed openness to discuss the change in relationships. Interviews averaged approximately three hours in length with several interviews requiring follow-up meetings. Documentary data were identified through the interviews to verify the statements presented. By constantly comparing statements made by individuals and substantiating these interview data with documentary data, a thorough investigation and analysis was possible.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how the management and staff of a school system utilized collective bargaining as the vehicle to influence the interpersonal and working relations within that system. Insights into the complex social organization of a school system as it migrated from conflict to mutual accommodation were made in an attempt to identify and develop theoretical assumptions.

Five time periods of organizational behavior were identified. A long period of stability, tranquility, and peaceful relations existed as the background stage. Conflict increased due to certain changes in the school system, community,

state, and nation and the tranquility evident in the prior period ended. The height of conflict occurred with two teachers' strikes and a rapid change in board leadership. A stage of transition due to an acceptable shift in policy formulation followed the conflict period. A gradual change from feelings of dissatisfaction to satisfaction with the organizational behavior was evidenced. Finally, a successful stage of conflict resolution evolved. This present stage included a period where administrative and teacher association leadership remained relatively stable, and evidenced high levels of cooperation.

Reinforcement of relationships existing between incumbent school board member defeat and superintendent turnover was an additional outcome of this case study. Dissatisfaction with existing educational policies were represented by defeat of incumbents during primary and general elections followed shortly by superintendent turnover.

This case study supports the concept that conflict is a usual or normal aspect of organizational behavior. Functional conflict may be necessary to promote and preserve the organization. As identified in this study, two bureaucracies developed within the organization and conflict became unmanageable as both parties sought power to accomplish diverse goals. An authoritarian leadership style was present during a peaceful period preceding unmanageable conflict. Factors of disparate goals and availability of collective bargaining forced the parties into conflict which was dysfunctional to the organization. Change from unilateral to bilateral decision making was consistent with a five stage public sector employee/management relationship model. The factors associated with these stages from tranquility to mutual accommodation included identification of strong leaders, an inflammatory issue, organizational structuring activities, struggle for power, decentralization of authority, and finally, mutual support and dependency.

Bilateral decision making was the result of these developments and included the successful incorporation of the collective bargaining model as part of an overall relationship of mutual accommodation.

Tranquility

Peaceful management/employee relations existed as the background stage where employees respected their leadership and declined from challenging decisions. An authoritarian form of governance existed as the mode of administrative operation. Teachers signed individual contracts with the school district for salaries, sick leave, and other benefits. Minimum benefits were determined by the State General Assembly by legislative enactment. The local board, in its attempt to provide excellence in the educational system, provided additional remuneration for its staff above the state minimum salaries. Satisfaction generally surrounded the perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and taxpayers for their school system and its decision makers.

Relative calm existed during a rapid growth phase of the 1950's and early 1960's. A stable form of governance under an authoritarian style preceded the low conflict stage with management respected, yet somewhat feared by the employees. School board membership was continous and individuals were able to remain on the board for consecutive terms. Incumbents were not challenged by other residents seeking election to the office. Vacancies which occurred were filled by board appointment with little input from outside individuals or groups.

Patterns of interaction existed at a low level between teachers and the supervising principal. Challenges were not made to the board or administration and teachers either left the district or avoided potential conflict. A high degree of stability and control was associated with this stage. Administrators ran the professional associations and curtailed any active union effort.

Positive sentiments were associated with the symbols identified for this preconflict stage. It was apparent, however, that some negative sentiment existed underground which would soon rise to the surface.

Low Conflict

The preconflict stage of tranquility and authoritative leadership style was soon replaced by changes toward increased conflict brought about by a reform board, a new superintendent, growth in the size of the district, management changes, and influence from the state. Disorganized conflict increased through this period as district reorganization resulted in the creation of new layers of administrative positions. A new superintendent selected because of his organizational ideas made strides in structuring the district under the reform bureaucratic model but was unable to control the organization. A chaotic situation resulted as professional and nonprofessional employees found it increasingly difficult to function in the organization. Growth of the school district and a spiraling increase in superordinate originated interactions produced a breakdown in the formal and informal lines of communication that had existed formerly. As the administrative bureaucracy matured, the teachers lost their direct line of communications to the supervising principal resulting in their subsequent loss of identity in the system. Control increasingly migrated toward the top administration with initiation of interaction paralleling that change. The accepted authoritarian management style of the 1950's and early 1960's changed to a nonresponsive bureaucracy and eventually into near dictatorship.

An issue dealing with evaluation and merit pay promoted unity within the teacher ranks uniting elementary and secondary teachers behind a common cause. Lack of effective administration of a merit salary schedule was perceived as a threat to the professionalism of teachers. The outcome of this interaction in

1967 was the development of a mutually acceptable evaluation instrument but no agreement could be reached on the merit pay issue.

The teachers's organization gained autonomy by developing a second bureaucracy within the school district. A previous, all inclusive education association reorganized as a purely teacher's association, which was evidenced by administrators dropping membership in the restructured organization return.

Throughout the low conflict period both groups were structuring their organizations to develop power for self interests. New layers of management, decreased communications, and the expected efficiency of merit pay, disturbed the security of teachers, raised fears, and caused the development of counter power. Resolution of conflict was not possible due to lack of maturation and problem solving leadership, and the fears of both sides of loss of power.

High Conflict

Each group had developed their respective positions and organizations to carry out a full scale effort to develop power and to limit the opposing side. Activities were at an extremely high level as teachers initiated interactions to promote desired reactions by the board and administration. Teacher leadership promoted activities which were dysfunctional to the school district. The major intent of these activities were to functionally inactivate the opposing side.

Incumbent board member defeat in the 1967 general election changed the board majority, and superintendent turnover occurred subsequent to this election. The board actively searched for and located a superintendent who could control the district and defeat the teacher leaders. The spiraling effect of superior originated interaction lead to increased unilateral decision making.

Dissatisfaction was increasingly evident as conflict became dysfunctional to the organization. Outside assistance was solicited by both groups to secure

information and direction for resolving the conflicts that occurred. Polarization of positions continued as both groups increasingly relied on third party support. Each group, however, perceived the other as being adversely influenced by an outside agent.

Conflict resolution was perceived as a win-loss power play with a high level of legal and political activity. Both groups were promoting reliance on the formal structure to resolve conflict. Teachers, lower level administrators, and residents of the community were unable to obtain resolution to conflicts existing during the height of the high conflict period in 1968 and 1969. The pattern which developed resulted in top management making unilateral decisions with promotion of action in a downward fashion. Middle and lower administrators were frequently bypassed by management thereby circumventing the channels of the organization. Results of this pattern of interaction were heightened hostile sentiments toward management and greater activity to express those sentiments. Teachers promoted interaction toward management and were able to obtain action by mass demonstration.

The high conflict period ended with both groups having lost effective power in the organization. Heightened activity during conflict promoted dysfunctional behavior as evidenced by a first teacher strike in April followed by a second teacher strike in September. Board solidarity was broken when one board member held a press conference which exposed the board tactics resulting in an end to the strike.

The teacher's group became politically active by endorsing three candidates for board membership in 1969. These candidates were successful in their election bid and again changed the board majority when officially installed.

Transitional

High conflict ended as both management and employee groups lost their effective power. Incumbent defeat was perceived by most informants as being symbolic of the beginning of a period of transition which would eventually lead to a new organizational pattern.

Key personnel of both the top administration and top association who had been associated with the high conflict gradually lost control of their respective groups as new leadership emerged. Sentiments, interactions, and activities changed markedly and individuals identified as symbolic of conflict were not compatible in the developing relationships.

During the period of transition there was an increased frequency of improved communication between the new board majority and new teacher leaders. Teachers, however, continued in their attempt to find resolution for problems through initiation of interaction but with channels of communication starting to develop in an upward and horizontal pattern.

A new board majority quickly acted to resolve the amnesty problem and fire the board solicitor. The teacher's association responded by removing sanctions placed against the district by the state and national education associations. Dissatisfaction with the governance style gradually changed to satisfaction as more favorable sentiments developed. Symbols of dissatisfaction, such as amnesty, sanctions, board solicitor, and teacher association president and other associated unfavorable sentiments were gradually being removed.

The resignation of the previous board president and superintendent in 1970 resulted in an improved climate for interaction. A type of decentralization of power ensued as building principals were more readily able to deal directly with their respective faculty and faculty representatives.

Mutual Accommodation

Mutual accommodation extended from 1971 to the conclusion of this study in 1977. A pattern continued where administration and board not only reacted to association initiation of interaction but also originated interaction directly for the association by calling in various association leaders for assistance in finding answers to certain problems. The win-loss attitude of the conflict era was virtually eliminated resulting in both the administration and association cooperatively working together to improve the educational system.

Mutual accommodation developed as the pattern for activities decision making. Less administrator and teacher time was spent in activities associated with conflict and crisis; correspondingly, teachers readily volunteered their talents to affect mutually agreeable resolution of administrator and/or teacher initiated interaction. The results were more positive sentiments between administrators, teachers, association leaders, students, and public with peace of mind and freedom from worrying about what crisis was next.

Autonomy gained within the individual buildings resulted in a high level of communications for the resolution of potential conflict at a low level. Central office administrative staff increased its involvement when an issue was viewed to have an impact on more than one building. A trend occurred in the district such that when subordinates became involved in the decision making affecting their role, satisfaction generally occurred.

The favorable feelings expressed during the transition period increased and continued toward mutual accommodation. The shift in sentiment was a result of staff meetings which initially increased in number and changed in content. Meetings became more rewarding to participants with a major emphasis on problem solving rather than as administrative initiated action. Conversely, mass meetings with community involvement disappeared as board, administration, and teachers resolved issues within the organization.

Activities associated with collective bargaining continued to occur, however, the number of individuals directly involved was reduced as decision making was concentrated into two small groups. Continuity of membership and structure within the two bargaining groups resulted in the removal of bargaining related dysfunctional activities from the general activities associated with operating the school system. Bilateral policy formulation was the final result as equilibrium was reached during mutual accommodation.

Conclusions

As identified in this case study, collective bargaining was a vehicle for organizational change from traditional to conflict to accommodation. The incorporation of collective bargaining itself was insufficient to insure development of more cooperative relations. However, the use of collective bargaining in this case had become part of the total employee/management mutual accommodation relationship and as such has reinforced positive sentiments.

A public sector employee/management model as represented in Figure 1 summarizes the five periods of organizational change as identified in this case study. The major behavioral and organizational factors associated with activities, interactions, sentiments, and symbols have been summarized and listed in reference to the five identified time periods. A generalization of this case study is reflected in Figure 2, "A Public Sector Employee/Management Relations Model."

The identification of five general periods of change was evident in this study of organizational change in the public sector. These periods were similar in nature to those identified in the private sector as found by Whyte in his study of Inland Steel Container Company.

Activities which occurred at a low level during the tranquility period spiraled to a high level reaching a climax stage at the termination of the high

		ACTIVITIES	INTERACTION	SENTIMENTS	SYMBOLS
		Low	Low		
TRANQUILITY PERIOD	Employee	Social and Sweetheart	Teachers Taught	Positive	District Reputation
	Management	No Turnover, Caretakers	Ruled with no consultation		
		Medium	Medium	Negative	
LOW CONFLICT PERIOD	Employee	Teacher Union, Board Meetings	Committee and Public Meetings	Fear of Security Loss	Teacher Evaluation and Merit Pay
	Management	Became more bureaucratic	Top down communications	More accountability	
		High	High	Negative	
HIGH CONFLICT PERIOD	Employee	Posturing, Strikes, PSEA/NEA	Public Meetings, Press Releases	Force the system to be open	Strikes, Scabs,
	Management	Fired Staff, Refused to Bargain	More and Larger Board Meetings	Reduced Militancy by force	No Amnesty, Leaders
		Medium	Medium		
TRANSITION PERIOD	Employee	Changed Leaders, Political Activity	Regular Meetings with Principals	Mixed	Leaders deposed, Amnesty, Decentralized authority
	Management	Changed Leaders, Started Bargaining	Increased Principal's autonomy		
		Low	Low		
MUTUAL ACCOMMODATION PERIOD	Employee	Joint news releases, Long officer tenure	Monthly and Quarterly meetings	Highly Positive	New Leaders, Open System
	Management	Low board turnover improved communications	Joint operations		

Figure 1: A Case Study of Public Sector Organizational Relationships

	ACTIVITIES	INTERACTION	SENTIMENTS	SYMBOLS
TRANQUILITY (PRECONFLICT) PERIOD	Low Level of Activity of the Part of Both Parties	Low Joint Interaction	Mixed	Tradition
LOW CONFLICT PERIOD	Increased Activity to Structure and Initiate Action (Both Parties)	Some Joint Interaction Resulting in Conflict	Increasingly Negative Due to Fear of Losing Status Quo	Preparing for the Struggle (The Issue)
HIGH CONFLICT PERIOD	High Level of Activities by Both Parties to Overthrow the Other	High Joint Interaction in Conflict, Including Third Parties (i.e., Strikes, Lockouts)	Highly Negative in Open Conflict	The Struggle for Power
TRANSITION PERIOD	Low Level of Activity to Heal Wounds, Look for New Leadership	Low Interaction Between Top Levels, Increased Interactions at Lower Levels	Mixed, Old Feelings Must Be Reevaluated	Turnover of Leadership
MUTUAL ACCOMMODATION PERIOD	Medium Level of Activity to Jointly Support	High Interaction, Improved Communications and Bilateral Decision Making	Highly Positive	Mutual Support, Trustful Leaders

Figure 2: Public Sector Employee/Management Relations Model

conflict period. A lower level of activity was present during transition as a result of both sides being badly hurt during the extreme conflict. Activities increased to a medium level as the new leadership attempted to provide mutual support in restructuring the organization. Evident in this study was the desire on behalf of both employees and management to provide mutual support in organizational activities which reinforced the concepts of this period of mutual accommodation. Perhaps this district was fortunate to have the proper conditions to move toward mutual accommodation while other districts utilize the transitional period to regroup for additional high conflict.

A similar interaction pattern was identified as the employee and management groups initially had low joint interaction during the period of tranquility. Increased employee activity in the periods of low and high conflict were to force management to take action on various proposals. Management activity and actions increased as a result leading to a high level of activity and interaction with the intent of destroying the opposing group's power. A lowered level of interaction between the top levels occurred during transition and resulted in higher levels of improved communications and bilateral decision making of the present mutual accommodation period.

Sentiments were initially mixed as a result of an outward acceptance for the elite management power structure which had longevity and a reputation. An increase in negative sentiments paralleled the increased activities and interactions. As indicated previously these sentiments may become more positive or negative as a result of favorable or unfavorable patterns of activities and interactions. Once the high conflict had climaxed, sentiment became more mutual and eventually became positive due to leadership turnover and other factors associated with the mutual accommodations period.

The symbols identified as having importance in the evolution from tranquility to mutual accommodation were utilized by both groups to affect activities, interactions,

and sentiments. Tradition kept activities and joint interaction at low levels and sentiments remained mixed during the tranquility period. Various issues were promoted and symbols of conflict identified as the organizational behavior moved from tranquility into high conflict. An end to the power struggle resulted in the removal of various symbols of conflict including board members, top administrators and employee leaders. Favorable symbols were compatable to a favorable pattern of activities, interactions, and sentiments.

This case study resulted in the development of a five stage operational model including tranquility, low conflict, high conflict, transition, and mutual accommodation which has been labeled as the public sector employee/management relations model. The model is similar to a three stage model developed by Whyte (1951) in his study of a private sector organization.

The development of this new model demands further study to test its general applicability. Does the model contain a sub-cycle of low conflict, high conflict, and transition; and does this sub-cycle occur in a repeating fashion in organizations producing repeated conflict? What are the conditional factors necessary in the transitional stage of the model to move from a recycling of conflict to a mutual accommodation stage? Do organizations exist that have not evolved from the original tranquility stage and if so, what are the factors affecting the employee/management relations in those organizations which allow this stage to remain acceptable to both parties. These questions suggest just a few avenues which must be pursued to test the public sector employee/management relations model and to further detail its influence on organizational behavior.

An area of importance in collective bargaining is the activities and sentiments of chief negotiators toward each other during the bargaining process. Conditions surrounding the activities and sentiments changed as organizational behavior moved from tranquility to conflict to mutual accommodation. An investigation

involving several organizations to test the activities and sentiments of chief negotiators and settlement behavior would be necessary to detail the relationships between collective bargaining behavior and the model.

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